Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP

Chancellor of the Exchequer

HM Treasury

Dear [*insert name of MP*],

**#ForgottenFreelances**

I write as a constituent to ask that you raise urgent questions in Parliament on behalf of freelance and self-employed workers who face a significant loss of income owing to the coronavirus pandemic.

Whilst I am pleased that so many have benefited from the Self Employed Income Support Scheme (SEISS) and that it has been extended, it remains the case that a significant number of freelance individuals have not been able to access any government support at all.

A key group that requires urgent attention is PAYE freelances and those who have PAYE income. Over the past 30 years, freelances doing shifts have been forced by companies, often under the direction of HMRC, to be taxed at source via the PAYE system. These individuals remain self-employed/freelance for the purposes of employment law with no protection or employment rights such as sick pay or maternity leave, yet are forced to pay tax and National Insurance Contributions at an employee rate. This PAYE income is now considered by HMRC to be ‘employee’ income rendering those individuals ineligible for the SEISS scheme.

Equally, those who work via limited companies/personal service companies – often forced to by companies – and have paid tax and National Insurance via PAYE or have been found to come within IR35 and are taxed at source, are also ineligible for support.

My own personal situation is [insert details]

My trade union, the NUJ has long campaigned for reform of the system, so that freelances are taxed appropriately as self-employed individuals and are able to have access to holiday and sickness pay and basic protection. The current crisis makes intervention to resolve this issue more vital than ever as this inequality is causing enormous distress and hardship.

HMRC has the necessary information required to calculate the amount of tax and NICs paid by PAYE freelances; or alternatively a new support scheme could be established using the PAYE data available to calculate average earnings for individuals who declare as ‘PAYE freelances’ and compensate them at the 80per cent rate directly, without going through an employer’s payroll system (this could be processed like a tax rebate). PAYE income and dividends could also be included in the SEISS scheme.

There is absolutely no logic why a government would continue to support sections of the working population but not others. I want to know that I have a future career and I need the government to provide the same financial aid that it is providing to others until I can get back to work.

A recent survey of more than 1,200 NUJ members found that a third did not expect their incomes to improve until next year, with 40 per cent saying it could take three to six months, and 16 per cent believe they will not be making their living from journalism after the coronavirus pandemic. That is why urgent action is needed now.

There are more than 5 million self-employed workers in the UK – entrepreneurial business people who form the bedrock of the UK economy. Your assistance now to breach this gap in support will help me and many other freelance workers, get through this crisis at the same time as righting a longstanding anomaly and inequality.

Yours sincerely,

[*name*]